

Hearing on Barrow P2P Legislation Held on Tuesday

Washington, D.C. - The House Subcommittee on Commerce, Trade, and Consumer Protection held a hearing today on H.R. 1319, the Informed P2P User Act. Congressman John Barrow (GA), Congresswoman Mary Bono Mack (R-CA), and Congressman Joe Barton (R-TX) introduced H.R. 1319 earlier this year. Congressman Barrow is a member of the Subcommittee and delivered an opening statement.

H.R. 1319 will help make Internet users more aware of the inherent privacy and security risks associated with P2P file sharing programs.

Many people have P2P software on their personal computers for legal, and sometimes illegal, file sharing. These programs are one of the fastest-growing uses of Internet technology, yet many of these programs can make ALL of their computer files available to anyone else using that P2P software. Personal information such as tax returns and medical records have been reported stolen.

A recent report indicated that P2P software was implicated in a security breach involving Marine One, the helicopter used by President Obama. Another high profile case involved Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer.

Specifically, the Informed P2P User Act:

- Ensures that P2P file sharing programs cannot be installed without providing clear notice and obtaining informed consent of the authorized computer user.

- Makes it unlawful to prevent the authorized user of a computer to prevent reasonable efforts to:

- 1) Block the installation of a peer-to-peer file sharing program, and

- 2) Disable or remove any peer-to-peer file sharing program.

- Gives enforcement authority to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC).

Congressman Barrow's opening statement follows:

Statement of Congressman John Barrow

Committee on Energy and Commerce Hearing on the Data Accountability and Protection Act, and the Informed P2P User Act

May 5, 2009 - Rayburn 2123

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

We live in a world where digital technology has connected people, their ideas, information, and products, making new kinds of collaboration and innovation possible. Without a doubt this technology has made us all more productive, but it has also made it easier for others to invade our personal records, and reveal private information about us and our families, that we choose not to disclose.

The purpose of today's hearing is to discuss threats to data security, and ways we can work to fill in the gaps that leave our personal records vulnerable. I had the opportunity to work with Congresswoman Mary Bono Mack on HR 1319, the Informed Peer to Peer User Act, and I hope that this hearing will shed some light on the privacy and security risks that are associated with peer-to-peer file sharing programs. A lot of folks who connect to these networks don't even realize that their most personal and private files are visible to everyone else on the network at any time. A lot of folks are posting their tax returns, financial records, and personal messages on the Internet, and don't even know it. I hope that through our work in this Committee, we're able to come up with a strategy that will let individuals know, in a way they can understand, that the information on their computers could be at risk. We have truth in lending and truth in labeling - I think it's time that we have truth in networking.

I want to thank Congresswoman Bono Mack for allowing me to work with her on the Informed Peer to Peer User Act; I want to thank Chairman Waxman and Ranking Member Barton for bringing these important issues to the forefront in our Committee; and most importantly, I want to thank every one of you on this panel for being here today to lend your expertise to this important issue.

Thank you.

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